BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Education Report

StrongStart centres launched

Education Minister Shirley Bond (right) was at Roy Stibbs elementary in Coquitlam for the launch. She was joined by (from left) principal Luigi DeMarzo, preschooler Kaythe Walker, Minister of State for Childcare Linda Reid, preschooler Draden Ward, and Burquitlam MLA Harry Bloy.

Sixteen early learning centres are opening around B.C. to help preschool-age children develop reading skills and get ready for kindergarten. The Province will provide $1.4 million to fund this first phase of its StrongStart centre program. Read more.

HOT TOPIC

In the fall of 2004, the Province introduced the graduation portfolio as a mandatory requirement for students graduating in the 2006/07 school year.

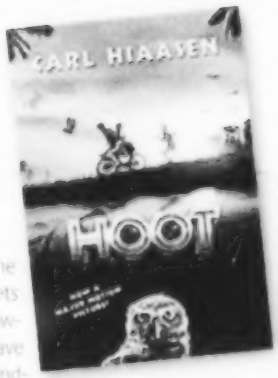
Currently, the graduation portfolio is introduced to Grade 10 students during Planning 10 – a required course. Teachers work with the students who gather evidence of achievement in six areas: arts and design, community involvement, career planning, employability skills, information technology and personal health. Schools have the freedom and flexibility to further support those students when the students are in grades 11 and 12. The ministry offers schools funding and other graduation portfolio resources.

But students, parents, teachers and school trustees all have concerns about graduation portfolios. That's why the graduation portfolio is no longer mandatory for students graduating in 2006/07, and was subject to a ministry review. Is the program accomplishing what was intended?

The ministry contracted nine school districts to host regional graduation portfolio review sessions. The districts invited educators, parents, students and interested members of the public from their own district and neighbouring districts. Approximately 1,500 people participated.

Ministry staff attended the review sessions. They collected and analyzed the feedback. The review and analysis of the graduation portfolio is now complete. The Minister will be considering recommendations resulting from this review and will make a decision about the program in the new year.

Reading Corner



Hoot - Carl Hiaasen

Roy is the new kid struggling to fit in at an urban school. When he sees a boy running from the school bus, Roy senses a mystery, sets himself on the boy's trail, and discovers that endangered burrowing owls are being threatened. He joins two other students to save them in this engaging and humorous environmental tale of friendship and adventure. This book is suitable for students in grades 6-8.

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond Minister of Education

Education in B.C. has experienced a lot of firsts this year.

The Province brought forward Bill 33 establishing class size limits for grades 4 -12, including new measures for consulting parents and teachers on class size and composition.

In June, members of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation ratified the first negotiated agreement since province-wide bargaining began in 1994. The five-year agreement covers approximately 40,000 elementary and secondary school teachers. Now all parties are free to focus on what really matters – improving student achievement.

The Province signed a historic agreement this July with the federal government and the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC). It will lead to the recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction over First Nations education in British Columbia. The agreement is the first of its kind in Canada and will help us close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

In November, we held the first-ever parent and teacher congresses to give our education partners the chance to share their vision for the future of education in our province.

We launched LearnNow BC, the first ever virtual school, and also the first virtual library reference desk, called AskAway. Both will help realize our goal of becoming the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.

Finally, representatives from 51 B.C. school districts met at the province's first Learning in Action Showcase to display and discuss state-of-the-art teaching practices.

I look forward to building on these firsts in the new year as we work together to further strengthen B.C.'s K-12 education system and bolster student achievement. For more on that, and to hear my wish that you and your loved ones have a happy, healthy holiday season and a wonderful start to 2007, I invite you to view my Christmas video messages for parents and teachers.